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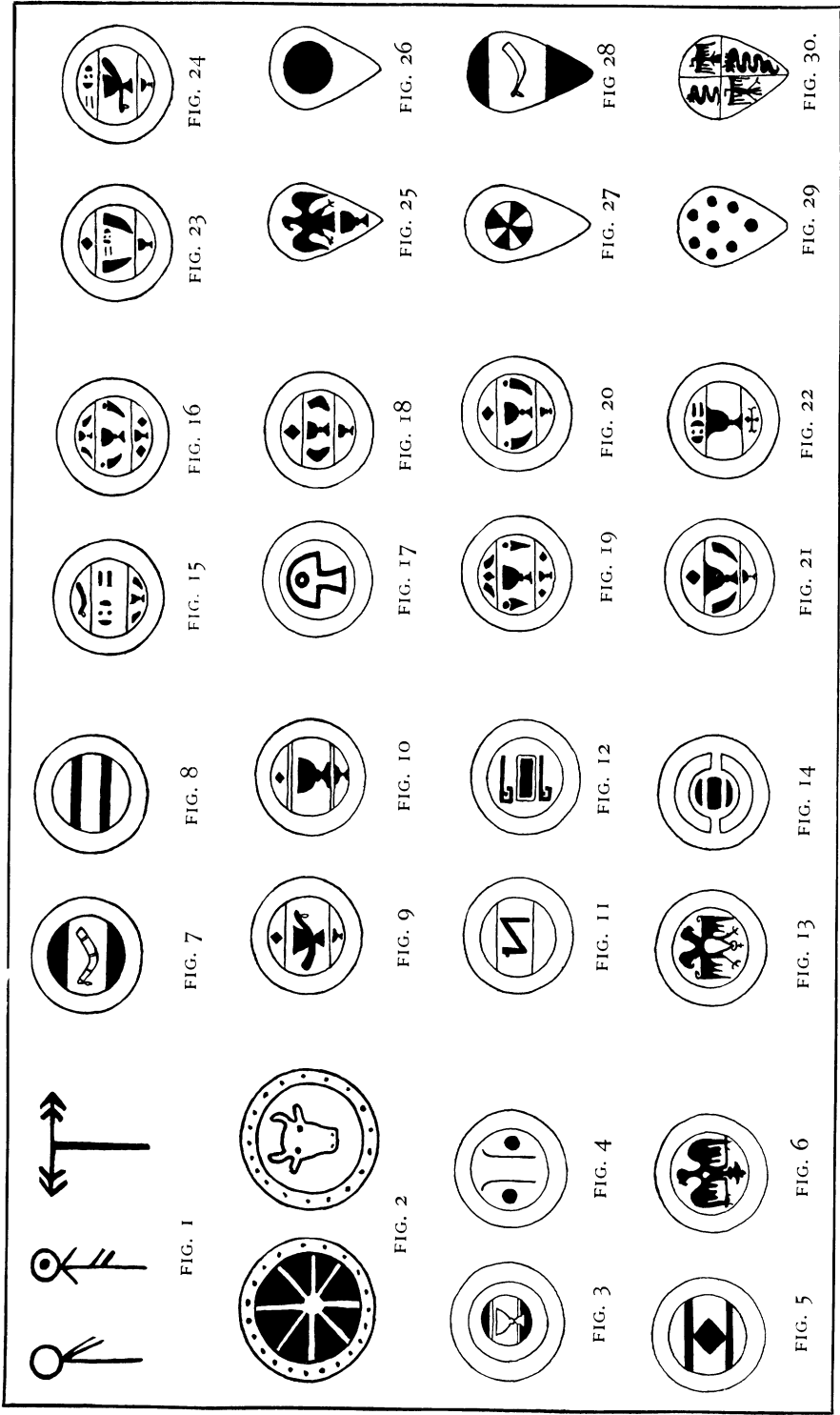
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SARACENIC HERALDRY IN  
CERAMIC DECORATION

**T**RIBAL, family or personal insignia date from prehistoric times. In Egypt, with which country this article more especially deals, such marks or emblems were in common use before the upper and lower halves of the country were united under Mena, Egypt's first historic king. Boats, plying up and down the Nile, bore upon their masts the standard of the owner, his tribe or home port. In fig. 1 are figured three such standards. The early Greeks, on leaving Egypt, doubtless carried back with them this use of personal, family or tribal insignia, for as early as the reign of Amenhotep the Third, Greek merchants were no unusual sight upon the streets of Thebes. In fig. 2 are shown two Grecian shields bearing their owners' devices and dating from the seventh century B. C. The standards of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, of the Assyrians and of the Romans are matters of history, yet these, as well as the examples cited above, can hardly be classed under "heraldic insignia" except in the loosest sense of the term. In Europe heraldry does not seem to have been established until the commencement of the Third Crusade, but about 1190 heraldic devices were borne upon the shields and weapons of war of many of the Frankish crusaders. Certainly, at the end of the twelfth century, European heraldry was already established on a firm basis. It would seem to have been first adopted by the Germans, and almost immediately afterward by the French, while Spain, Italy and England followed soon after, in the order named. Judging from the epoch when heraldry first comes into notice in Europe, and considering that it was already an established fact among the Arabs as early as the ninth century, we are led to believe that heraldry had its inspiration in the East. We are familiar with "the Lion" of Ibn Tulun, with "the Duck" of Kalaun; with the "Eagle" of the redoubtable Salah-ed-din, and with the fleur-de-lys

of Sahaban, devices ranging in date from the ninth to the early fourteenth century. From existent examples of the shields (kite-shaped escutcheons) and cartouches (circular escutcheons) of the early Saracens, we see that by the thirteenth century there was already a fixed idea as to the arrangement of these coats-of-arms or *renk*, as they were called. The rarest form of *renk* was that of a round-topped, pointed-based kite, and this form very early gave way to that circular in shape—the cartouche. There appear to have been two kinds of *renk*, the coat-of-arms proper, and another which served to define the office of its owner. Fig. 4 represents one of the latter, the polo sticks and balls of a *Jokendar* or polo master; another common charge is that in which one or more cups appear upon the field (fig. 3), proving its owner to have served as Cup Companion or personal friend of the Sultan or Emir, a survival, it may be, of the much-coveted ancient Egyptian position of "Friend of the King," a title dating from a period some thousand of years before the Mohammedan era.

As has been said above, the coat-of-arms is usually confined within a circular cartouche, and this in turn is divided by a broad fess, though two or even three are often seen upon a shield. The charges most commonly met with upon the ceramic wares of the Saracens, as also upon others of their commodities, are a lozenge, cup, daggers, hieroglyphics (the *nei tau* or "lord of the Two Lands" of the ancient Egyptians), a scimitar, keys, polo sticks (with or without balls), fleur-de-lys, eagles (single or double-headed) and cornucopiae. At present there seems to be an awakening interest in things Saracenic, with the result that European museum directors are not merely on the watch for the rare inlaid "kursy," mosque doors, enameled lamps or brass trays encrusted with silver and gold, but are hastily gathering every possible fragment of the *graffito* or early incised pottery of the Saracens of Egypt. This ware, often in the form of deep or shallow bowls, is usually covered with a



SARACENIC HERALDIC DEVICES

translucent, dark amber-colored glaze through which the *renk* of the owner and the elaborate Arabic inscriptions with which it is decorated, stand out with startling freshness and vigor. Unfortunately these bowls, seldom met with except in the mounds or rubbish heaps that now serve alone to mark the early Arab sites, usually appear in the shape of mere fragments. Yet these fragmentary inscriptions, when the mass of material that now awaits deciphering has been thoroughly gone over, may be the means of dating many a nameless Emir's mausoleum, many a beautiful enamelled glass bowl or lamp, not to mention the numerous ivory inlaid ebon doors that once graced the entrance to some early mosque or private house. The Metropolitan Museum now possesses a number of these fragments collected by Mr. Lythgoe during his recent trip to Egypt, many of which bear the *renk* of the Emir or noble for whom they were made. In fig. 7, is shown the *renk* of the Commandant Aktuh (and see fig. 31), who served under El Ashraf Tuman Bey, 1516 A. D., whilst the *renk* beside it, fig. 8, also found upon one of the Museum fragments, represents the arms of a noble of an earlier date, those of the Emir Bahadur, who died in the year 1339 A. D. In fig. 5, a cartouche often found alike on metal, glass and woodwork, are the arms of the Emir Akbugha, who also lived during the early years of the fourteenth century. The cartouche figured beside it (fig. 6) is thought to be that of the Emir Tukuzdemir (and see fig. 31) who died about 1345 A. D., but at present it is difficult in many cases to assign the cartouches to any given ruler or vassal. However, in connection with the devices appended, the following names and dates are usually associated.

Fig. 9 to the Emir Djani na'ib Djuddah (Djani-bak)

- " 10 " " Kansuh-el-Muhammady
- " 11 " " El Turkomany
- " 12 " " Arkatay
- " 13 " " Kaifa Nasir-ed-din Mahmud

Fig. 14 to the Prince Javal-ed-din Tamim

- " 15 " " Emir Qambay
- " 16 " " Ezbek
- " 17 " " Almas
- " 18 " " Mamay
- " 19 " " A descendant of Ezbek,  
though as a rule *renk*  
were not hereditary
- " 20 " " Sudun
- " 21 " " Kait Bey
- " 22 " " Agnal Hakim
- " 23 Unknown noble under Kait Bey
- " 24 the Emir Beshtak
- " 25 " " Tukuzdemir
- " 26 An unknown Emir
- " 27 " " "
- " 28 Found upon an unknown tomb  
east of Cairo, this no-  
ble served under Ghury.

The early kite-shaped coat-of-arms of the Saracens seems to have been still in use by the Moorish potters of Spain at a comparatively late date, since the shield figured under fig. 29 is taken from a Hispano-Moresque plate, the property of the Museum, which is attributed to a period towards the end of the reign of John II of Spain. In Italy, also, this form seems to have survived to a period as late as the latter half of the fifteenth century. In fig. 30 is figured a shield bearing the arms of the Sforzas and attributed to that date. Aside from heraldry the early potters of Europe owed much to the Saracens, both in respect to form and decoration. Certainly the secret of the so-called ruby lustre as practiced at Gubbio would seem to have come originally from Cairo, and the author of this monograph has in his possession a ruby-lustred fragment found in the rubbish heaps at Fostat that rivals anything he has ever seen amongst the extant specimens of the work of the Andreoli. A common sign of the Gubbio fabrique, the Gubbino mark, or foliated G, seems to have been copied from the decoration exactly similar that is found on the backs of so many of the early silicious glazed plates and bowls picked up in such quantities upon the sites of Saracenic towns along the Nile Valley. One immediately

thinks of the similar decoration on the backs of pieces of Hispano ware, but the pieces lately found near Cairo and at Kus in upper Egypt antedate these by two hundred years or more. Even the rosette, so often lusted upon the foot of Valen-

cian ware, has been found upon fragments of dainty bowls and plates totally unlike any of the Hispano wares that have come down to us and dating from a period as early as the twelfth century at least.  
G. C. P.

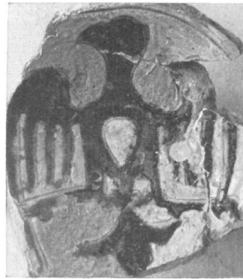


FIG. 31.

ON A SEMI-CIRCULAR PANEL OF  
THE MADONNA AND CHILD  
WITH DONOR ON EITHER  
SIDE, BY GIOVANNI DA  
MILANO

THIS picture would appear to have originally filled an arch over a door. The Madonna holds the Infant Christ upon the ledge of the lintel while the donors kneel on either side. The attribution to Giovanni da Milano has been confirmed by Dr. Siren of Stockholm, whose work on Giotto and the artists of the trecento is well known. Giovanni da Milano was, as his name implies, of Lombard origin, but he worked for many years with Taddeo Gaddi. He also learned something from the Siennese school and adopted a Siennese delicacy of design and technical elaboration. His faces show more individualism than those of his contemporaries, and mark a first effort in the direction of the naturalistic movement of the

fifteenth century,\* and this side of his art is particularly well marked in our example where the portraits of the donors show an attempt, surprising for the period at which it was painted, at the reading of individual character.

Giovanni da Milano's chief defect was a certain sentimental affectation of pose which discloses his Lombard origin. Fortunately our example is free from this and has great dignity and simplicity of outline as well as a remarkable warmth and richness of color. It was not often that the artists of the latter half of the fourteenth century so nearly approached to monumental severity and grandeur of style.

R. E. F.

\*"In connection with a certain breadth of composition, is a study of the detail of drapery which afterwards became remarkable in Masolino and Masaccio. Relief by light and shade is in part attained and only diminished in effect by too marked a minuteness of study."  
—Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *History of Painting in Italy*. Vol. I, p. 401.